

An Abstract of the Present State OF THE Protestants in France.

HIS Majesty having earnestly recommended the calamitous condition of the French Protestants, to the charity of his Subjects; it will be reasonable that some account should be given of the Persecution and Severities used towards those unhappy people, which have driven them from their estates and country, and caused them in so great numbers to seek for refuge among strangers.

The aforelaid pressures are of two sorts; one from *the iniquity of the Laws*, the other from *the violence of Men*.

As to the first, Whereas the Protestants of France, as a reward for their eminent services to the Government and Crown; were supported by the memorable *Edict of Nantes* bearing date April 1598. ratified thro the succession of several Kings, and in particular by him who now reigns: yet of late without any pretence of forfeiture, or ill demerit on their part, they have bin subjected to many severities directly contrary to the concessions of the said Edict; and indeed that humanity which is due to all men, even from heathen strangers, and professed enemies.

An instance whereof will be *first*, the Edict of Feb. 28. 1680. whereby, in imitation of the Egyptian *Pharaoh* with the Israelites, it is ordered, that *Protestant women shall not be delivered in Child-birth, but by midwives and Surgeons who are Papists*; and they are commanded to *Baptize the Children new born*, who are thenceforth esteemed to be members of the Church of Rome, and if when they come to age they shall profess the Protestant religion, will be liable to be punished as Apostats, and their Parents obnoxious for perverting them.

2^{ly}. The Edict of June 17. 1681. whereby it is ordered that *the Children of Protestants shall be admitted to abjure the Religion of their parents, as soon as they shall attain the age of seven years*: And it is then put into the choice of the children whither they will continue with them, and be there maintained with large allowances such as the Papist magistrate shall appoint; or have the like provision made at the charge of the Parents elsewhere. By which offer of licence the children are not only encouraged to disobedience and debauchery; but rendred the Masters, nay Persecutors of their Parents.

3^{ly}. The Edict of Novemb. 19. 1680. which ordains that *when any Protestant shall happen to be sick, he shall suffer himself to be visited by the Papist officers and Priests*; who at their coming remove from him his friends, relations and attendants, and among themselves interrogate him according to their pleasure; and his answers are usually interpreted to be a reconciliation of himself to Popery, and an abjuring of the Protestant Religion: So that if he die, the family are esteemed the children of a *Papist father*, and so to be bred in that

testant religion, he is to be treated as a *relapsed Heretic*.

4^{ly}. The Edicts of July 9. & 31. 1681. which restrain *the Protestants from having Schoolmasters to teach their children who are of their religion*, more then barely to write and read: and only one is allowed in a whole City: and besides this they only may teach who are licenc'd by Papist officers: whereby also their Universities are suppress'd: which was the very course formerly taken by Julian the Apostate for the extirpating of Christianity; And was the method of the Ammonites, to put out the right eyes of the Israelites, as a reproch upon them.

5^{ly}. The Edicts of Novemb. 6. 1679. Jun. 11. Aug. 17. 1680. and June 28. 1681. which order the turning of Protestants out of civil and military employments, and the disabling tradesmen from keeping shops or exercising their Professions. Which is in effect to command them and their families to starve or be starv'd.

6^{ly}. The Edict of Nov. 19. 1680. which Grants to all Protestants who change their religion, a respite for three years of paying their debts, laying a prohibition upon their creditors to bring any action against them: Which as it is a violent temptation to ill men to change their Religion, so it absolutely ruins the credit of others, who are no longer trusted, the Creditor being insecure of being paid.

7^{ly}. The Edict of June 1680. which orders that no subject of France of what quality, condition, age or sex soever, now making profession of the Roman religion; may ever forsake it to go over to the Reformed, for what cause, reason, pretence, or consideration soever: And whosoever shall act to the contrary shall be condemn'd to make Amende honourable, to perpetual banishment, and confiscation of goods. Likewise all Ministers of the Reformed religion are forbid to receive any Proselyte coming to them from Popery, or suffer in their Churches or assemblies any such, under penalty that the Minister shall be deprived from ever exercising his function, and of the suppression of the place or Church for ever after. Upon which pretence, and others as unreasonable, (for how is it possible for any congregation to provide that no person formerly of another persuasion, should come among them:) an almost infinite number of Churches have bin demolish'd. They are the words of the Provincial Assembly of the Province of Paris, held in the months of March and May 1681. alleg'd as a testimony of the piety of the King. So that at this present, the Protestants are fain to go in many places 30. or 40. miles, to get their children baptized, or perform any public act of religious worship. And if it happen in case of carrying children to be baptiz'd, that the Papist midwife hath don that office before, then the Parent is accused as sacrilegious: and of rebaptizing a

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But since mention is made of *Amende honorable*, as a part of the punishment of a Convert to the Reformed religion, it may not be amiss to give some account of it.

The person condemn'd to this punishment, is to go into some public place in his Shirt, with a Torch in his hand, and a rope about his neck, followed by the common Hangman; and in this equipage, as if he were the most Infamous Malefactor, he is to ask pardon of God, the King and Justice for what he has don. That is for leaving a Religion which he believed to be Heretical, and Idolatrous; and for imbracing the truth, and desiring to save his soul, he is to be made a spectacle to God, Angels and Men.

But over and above all this severity of the *Laws*; there is added, the cruelty of *Magistrates*, and violence of *Souldiers*. Against a Protestant, any accusation is greedily receiv'd, and severely prosecuted; and if after long vexation, expence and imprisonment, the innocence of the Person accus'd shall be so manifest as not to be dissembled, he can hope for no reparation against the Papist false accuser.

Nor is the condition of Protestants in *civil causes* better then that in *criminal*. If any Protestant sues a Papist for the Interest of an estate, or Debt: or complains of being over-rated in Taxes; whereas he should be heard in several parts of France, according to the *Edict of Nantes*; by *Chambres Miparties*, where are Counsellors and Judges who are Protestants as well as Papists; now they are entirely expos'd to their mortal and profest enemies: and what the success of such trials is likely to be, twill be needless to declare.

But as if this hardship were not enough; in those Countries where Protestants most abound, Soldiers are sent among them to live at free quarter, call'd by them *discretion*, and do that execution and barbarity, which they have practis'd among conquer'd enemies. Where what they cannot devour, or make advantage of by sale, they spoil and trample under feet: Beat with cudgels the men, clap swords and pistols to their breasts; abuse and ravish the women: and when they have pillagd their houses, tie the Possessors to their horse tails, and drag them to *Mals*: where having thrown holy-water into their faces, they say they are Catholics; and if they disown it, shall be proceeded against as *Relapst*.

When persons weary of this usage, attempt to fly into foreign parts, being discover'd they are clapt into prisons and dungeons, there to be starv'd to death, or perish by noisome dis-

eases: And those miserable Persons who unable to bear these extremities renounce their religion, are at the same time forc'd to give it under their hands that they have abjur'd *without constraint, and of their own free choice*. And all this usage is still pretended to be, *gentle and innocent means made use of, to bring Heretics to the bosom of the Church, becoming the bounty and goodness of the king, and conformable to the mind of the divine Pastor, who alwaies retains bowells of mercy for these straid sheep; and wills they should be brought back and not hunted away, because he desires their salvation and regrets their loss*. Which conduct is very far from the rigor wherewith the Catholics are treated in the neighbouring kingdoms which are infected with heresy; by which it appears, what difference there is between reason and passion, between the meekness of Truth, and rage of Imposture, between the Zeal of the house of God, and the fury of Babylon. They are the words of the Bishop of *Claudiopolis*, to the King, in the head of the deputies of the Clergy of *France*, and are intended as a reproch to the people of England and the Government thereof.

And may not now the desolate Church of France take up her lamentation and say? *Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by, behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is don unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce Anger*. Lam. 1. 12.

But Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Matth. 5. 7.

Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertain'd Angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being your selves in the body. Heb. 13. 1, 2, 3.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gather'd all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me, I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me. &c. Mat. 25. 31, &c.